



Town of Arlington, Massachusetts
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Minutes 07/14/2010

Arlington Tree Committee DRAFT Minutes for the Meeting on July 14, 2010
Posted 7/22/2010

Town Representatives present: Clarissa Rowe, Board of Selectmen, preparer of these minutes, Tree Committee member, John Bean, Director, DPW, Town of Arlington, Jim Dodge, Tree Warden, Town of Arlington; Juliana Rice, Town Counsel, Town of Arlington

Tree Committee Members Present: Mary Ellen Aronow, Eliza Burden, Lisa Decker, Andrew Fischer, Patti Muldoon, Sally Naish, Walter Phillips, Corinna Vanderspek, Greg Watt

Attendees from the Public: Elinore Charlton, Pamela Donleavy, Paul Goldmuntz, Amy Haberland, Claudia Van Dijk, Bruce Whelple

Nicole Laskowski, Arlington Advocate

1. NStar Tree Trimming

The first meeting of the newly formed Tree Committee was called because of the high volume of public complaints that the Tree Warden and the DPW have received about NStar's unacceptable tree trimming. The complaints have prompted the Town Manager to send a letter, July 13, 2010, to NStar telling them to stop any tree trimming in the Town of Arlington. It says that the Town has "...serious concern over recent unacceptable tree trimming by NStar and its contractors, including unauthorized entry onto private property, unremediated damage to private property, and decimation of the private trees and public shade trees far in excess of what is necessary for proper clearance of utility lines".

Town Counsel Rice and Tree Warden Dodge have discussed the tree trimming issue with neighboring towns, including Cambridge, Watertown and Winchester. The Tree Warden from Brookline, Tom Brady, has initiated a permit system for NStar that requires 32 hours of arborist training for anyone pruning the Town's trees. The Town of Brookline has also done a public shade tree inventory that shows their tree canopy being worth 32 million dollars.

The City of Cambridge has set standards for the tree trimming. Their standard allow 6 feet of trimming below the electric wires, 6 feet to the sides of the wires and 12 feet above the wires.

2. Areas of Decimation in Town

The meeting attendees discussed the different public streets and private ways in town where the substandard tree pruning was done. Those streets include Waverly Street, Highland Avenue, Wachusett, Florence, Hawthorn and Coolidge. The DPW and the Tree Warden's offices are keeping a log of all complaints. Anyone hearing of future complaints should notify the offices of the Tree Warden (jdodge@town.arlington.ma.us) and the Board of Selectmen (clarissa.rowe@comcast.net).

3. Immediate Recommendations

The following actions and recommendations were made:

A. Send letters of complaint to David Polson, Manager – Vegetation Management, NStar Electric, One NStar Way, Westwood, MA 02090.

Please copy the Board of Selectmen and the Tree Warden on any letter sent.

B. Email the Board of Selectmen so that they know of your specific complaints because we expect that NStar will ask for a hearing with the Board in the near future.

C. Post this information to the Arlington List. Paul Goldmuntz has done this.

D. Distribute these meeting minutes to the other members of the Board of Selectmen and to our Beacon Hill delegation. (Because of similar problems in Watertown, State Representative Jonathan Hecht has been actively involved in this subject, and Rep. Barry Feingold has filed legislation to deal with this problem.)

4. Other Tree Committee Business

Sally Naish accepted the role as chair of the Tree Committee. The role of the Clerk will be rotated alphabetically. The next two meetings will be on August 11th and September 8th. It was decided that the Committee should have a Town Day Booth this year to solicit ideas about our public street trees from the general public. The Town Day Booth has been reserved. Walter Phillips will look into the Forest Service's valuation formula for the valuation of tree canopies, and will also research tree inventory software through Google. Clarissa Rowe will investigate what happened to the old website, ArlingtonTrees.org.